DTCD Newsletter

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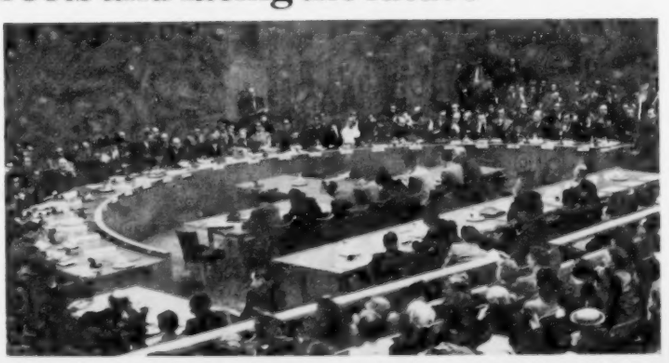
Multilateral technical co-operation reaches forty: Remembering our roots and facing the future

The fortieth anniversary of multilateral technical co-operation, which the United Nations celebrates this year, is a time to take stock. For UNDTCD, it is a time to step back and remember what was in the minds of the representatives of United Nations Member States forty years ago. It is also a time to ask how relevant the work of UNDTCD is in today's and tomorrow's world.



The United Nations Economic and Social Council in Lake Success in 1950, the year the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance was launched and Member States pledged $20 million for grant technical co-operation at the first Technical Assistance Conference.

Direct heir

UNDTCD, through its direct predecessor entities, traces its origins to the very first technical co-operation missions sent to developing countries by the United Nations Secretariat soon after the Organization was created. The expertise and experience of UNDTCD in most fields of its competence, including public administration and finance, development planning and natural resources, dates back to these first years. This is much longer than the twelve years since the Department was created in its present form through the merging of a number of United Nations substantive and administrative units supporting technical co-operation. This work also precedes and set the foundation for the steps taken by the General Assembly 25 years ago to merge key aspects of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA) and the United Nations Special Fund to form UNDP. This Department is thus the direct heir to a forty-year tradition of technical co-operation provided by the United Nations Secretariat.

Relevance

But the issue at this 40 years crossroads is not longevity; it is relevance. Why was UNDTCD created in 1978 and are the reasons still valid today?

Human resources development was a main goal of UNDTCD at the time of its creation. It remains central to the Department's work in all areas of its competence today. This is not to say that technical co-operation has not changed in forty years. On the contrary, this Department has been constantly seeking new approaches, modalities and tools to help developing countries build up their national capacities.

How effectively this is being done, or the technical relevance of UNDTCD work, is an issue on which developing country governments can and do pass judgment every day. And we try to make this easy. As part of the UN Secretariat, UNDTCD is a transparent organization. It does everything possible to enable developing countries to know what they are getting when they request UNDTCD services, making known its capabilities in different fields and providing curricula vitae of its advisors so developing countries can make informed choices in their own self-interest.

That developing countries have found our expertise useful and relevant is suggested by the Department's very growth. While we initially provided only a few million

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Cost-cutting geologists in Togo

These field geologists in Togo found diamonds

Geologists working in projects executed with UN technical assistance are expected to find minerals in the most cost efficient manner, just like their colleagues from mining companies.

This is precisely what UN-DTCD geologists and their Togolese counterparts are doing in Togo.

Diversification

This small Least Developed West African nation is one of the very few countries in this region which is reinvesting part of its phosphate revenues in mineral exploration programmes. A world leading phosphate exporter, Togo is highly dependent on this commodity, which accounts for some 65 per cent of its foreign exchange. Reducing this dependence through diversification of the country's mineral exports is a government priority.

In 1988, an exploration project was launched with UNDTCD technical expertise and financial assistance from UNDP. Complementing an ongoing geochemical survey and the mineral inventory of the whole territory being carried out by the Government, the project's task is to cover 12,300 kms in a three and a half year period. Exploration methods such as geochemistry, geophysics and remote sensing, which have contributed to the discovery of a number of mineral deposits elsewhere in West Africa, are being used to identify mineralized bodies occurring beneath the surface at a shallow depth.

Impressive output

Translated into numbers, this systematic geochemical survey and mineral inventory is impressive. Each month during the six-month-long dry season, while recording noteworthy geological information, field geologists assisted by two prospectors and seven field hands collect some 350 stream sediments, 65 pan concentrates, and an large number of rock samples. The field team is expected to cover between 150 and 200 square kilometres monthly, depending on the region's accessibility. Each year, under this project alone, the laboratory of the Bureau of Mineral Research of Togo carries out some 210,000 chemical analyses for base and precious metals. Over 250 thin sections and 1,130 mineralogical determinations are investigated.

Whatever its origin, a sample is the geologist's most precious asset. The cost of collecting even the most uninteresting looking sample can become astronomical. However, the cost conscious teams in Togo have been keeping exploration expenditures to a bare minimum through careful and efficient survey planning and some co-opertion from Togolese peasants. The average price per sample has been kept within the range of $50, which is quite competitive with private industry costs.

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dollars worth of technical co-operation, we now deliver more than $160 million worth each year through hundreds of projects, making UN-DTCD one of the largest United Nations executing agencies.

But there is another quite unique facet of the Department's relevance - yesterday's, today's and tomorrow's - which should be recalled at this juncture.

Multilateralism

UNDTCD is above all else a multilateral organization. Member States saw the need to create it and offer its expertise to developing countries as an alternative to bilateral assistance or private sector services because of the special characteristics of the multilateral approach: its universality, its political neutrality and its commercial disinterestedness.

The international community has recently reaffirmed the key role of multilateralism in technical co-operation. There is wide acknowledgement that the unique attributes of the multilateral approach are as important today as they were in the past and that developing countries count on multilateralism as they face the future. The issue still under discussion by Member States is precisely how to ensure that multilateral technical co-operation meets the current and changing needs of developing countries as effectively as possible.

As we enter the 1990s, many developing countries are ready and eager to manage their own technical co-operation programmes. Fortunately so. If we had not reached this point, all of us within the UN development system would have had to ask ourselves what went wrong over the past forty years. As it is, the UN development system is being encouraged and enabled to move into new areas of work, programming upstream from projects and reinforcing developing country management capacities.

UNDTCD applauds these trends and welcomes the opportunity to accommodate its support to meet the emerging and different needs of developing countries.

Tooling up for elections around the world

Namibia. Nicaragua. El Salvador. Haiti. Cambodia. Western Sahara. Around the world, the United Nations is being asked to help in the electoral process.

Most press coverage focuses on the United Nations' political role in this process. Often forgotten is the technical co-operation being provided in support of the intricate administrative process behind elections, from the initial creation and maintenance of electoral registers to problems relating to voter identificaton, the complex logistics of the election itself and vote counting.

Broadened expertise

At the request of Governments, the Development Administration Division of UNDTCD has been broadening the range of technical expertise it provides in this field.

In Nicaragua and in Haiti, for instance, consultant teams analyzed electoral laws and regulations and then made recommendations regarding the administration of the electoral process.

The initial support provided by teams of consultants was in both cases followed by technical co-operation projects.

In Nicaragua, an evaluation of the status of civil registration was prepared and on this basis a project designed to solve problems identified and to link the civil registers to the organization of a permanent electoral register. The study also covered the possibility of producing national identification cards for both electoral and general civic purposes.

In Haiti, six international consultants are helping the Provisional Electoral Council organize elections. Efforts include the design of a motivation and education campaign aimed at a largely illiterate creole-speaking population, legal advice for the design of regulations, time and motion studies of the registration and voting process and the organization and computerization of vote counting. As in Nicaragua, a project will be prepared to replace the costly ad hoc electoral registers established for each election with permanent Electoral Registers.

In the pipeline

Other activities are being planned. In El Salvador, preparatory assistance is proposed for an electoral motivation campaign, a large-scale training programme for Central Electoral Council staff and to explore the possibility of replacing identification cards issued at the county level with national identification cards valid for both electoral and civic purposes.

In addition, UNDTCD interregional advisory services are now available for initial appraisal of needs and the preparation of project documents for more ambitious endeavors in the dynamic field of administration of elections.

The poster (above right) was produced as part of an education and motivation campaign in Haiti which targetted the creole-speaking population. In Nicaragua, the United Nations helped monitor elections in a sovereign country for the first time ever. In the photo, the United Nations team is releasing a report on the electoral process just before the elections.

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Forty years of making a difference . . .

As part of our commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of United Nations techn briefly mention a few UNDTCD activities which have broken new ground. Whethe lasting contribution it made to human resources development in a particular field, t

Water for the desert

In Chad, 120,000 people from 130 villages in the Ouaddi and Guera regions have been provided with potable water as a result of one of the most successful large-scale ground water operations assisted by UNDTCD.

In this Sahelian region which has been suffering from the effects of drought for the past two decades, more than 500 boreholes were drilled in a 21 month period concluded in April 1990 under extremely difficult geophysical conditions. Despite these conditions, which included granitic, hard-to-drill surfaces, the boreholes had a 50 per cent success rate.

The project also trained 80 national professionals in geophysical techniques with UNDP and UNCDF funds. In addition, a team of project sociologists collected data on water usage and needs and trained villagers in water-related health measures and pump maintenance.

Now assisted by a small international team and provided with state-of-the-art drilling and geophysical equipment, Chad is continuing its efforts to tap water in the desert under a second, government-executed phase.

The Cairo Demographic Centre

For 27 years, in collaboration with the Government of Egypt and with financial assistance from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), UNDTCD has supported the creation and development of the Cairo Demographic Centre (CDC).

This centre now provides a virtually unique facility for training in population and development at four post-graduate levels: the General Diploma, the Special Diploma in Population and Development, the M.Sc., and in conjunction with the University of Cairo, the Ph.D.

Nearly 1000 students have been trained at the CDC from around the developing world. The international component of CDC's training and the interdisciplinary scope of its work are what make this institution so unique.

Egyptian, international and United Nations staff train some 15 Egyptian and 35 international students annually. They also conduct workshops and seminars and carry out research and CDC's programme of translation of key population texts into Arabic and information dissemination.

First joint venture for two Yemens

Technical co-operation can be a first step towards political rapprochement. Such was the role played by the Yemeni Joint Project for Natural Resources.

Begun in 1984 with UNDTCD technical assistance and UNDP funding, this joint project between the Yemen Arabic Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen before their unification in 1990 was viewed as a model for co-operative ventures to be undertaken in the future.

Upon the completion of this project in June 1991, the new, united Yemen should be equipped with a state-of-the-art geoscientific data set which will contribute significantly to the country's economic well being. This will include hydrogeological, volcanic/earthquake risk and coloured topographic maps, a unified map of Yemen, helicopter and fixed wing airborne magnetic and radiometric survey data. The project is also designing a water resources data collection monitoring network. In addition, the project is training a cadre of high-quality technical staff in project management and monitoring.

. . . some landmarks

l co-operation, we are using these two pages to was the scope, the innovative approach, or the s work was in some way a landmark.

Geothermal pioneer

For the past thirty years UNDTCD has played a pioneering role in promoting the exploration for and development of geothermal resources in developing countries.

This work began in 1961, with the organization of the United Nations Conference on New Sources of Energy, held in Rome. A scientific and technical milestone, this conference was largely responsible for alerting developing countries to the economic importance of geothermal resources and to the need to assess their availability and potential.

Over the years UNDTCD has executed 33 geothermal exploration projects of various sizes in 22 developing countries. As a direct result of these projects, generating units have been installed in El Salvador,Turkey and Kenya. In addition, UNDTCD-executed projects have contributed to the installation of plants in Mexico, Nicaragua and the Philippines, and it is expected that plants will be soon be established in Bolivia, Djibouti and Ethiopia as a result of such projects. Technical advisory services are being provided outside the framework of projects to many other countries, including Argentina, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Self-reliant planning in Zimbabwe

Shortly after it achieved independence in 1980, Zimbabwe adopted the use of development planning to guide the transformation of its economy and called on UNDTCD to help it build up its self-reliance in this field. A decade of assistance has enabled Zimbabwe to do much of the work in this area without outside help.

UNDTCD expertise was first provided under a UNDP-funded project to help prepare a Transitional Development Plan (1982-1985) and the First Five Year Plan (1986-1990). Zimbabwe economists are now preparing the Second Five Year Plan (1991-1995) and a series of annual plans integrated with the national budget. They are also working on the design and preparation of the country's first comprehensive Investment Register, which sets out national investment priorities, and in the evaluation of investment projects.

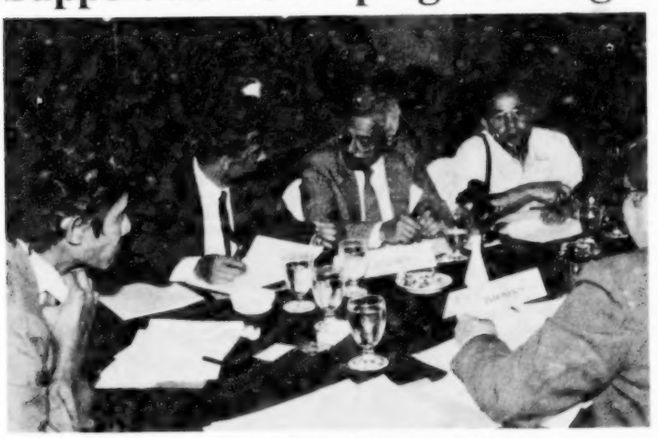
Given Zimbabwe's new capacities, UNDTCD is now providing more specialized assistance in the formulation of a regional planning framework, a long-term perspective plan for Zimbabwe, sectoral reviews and other studies, and training for provincial line ministries and the National Planning Agency staff.

The China census of 1982

China's 1982 census, in which over one billion people were counted, was assisted by the largest project ever executed by UNDTCD. China has a history of several thousand years in population statistics, but this was only the third to be carried out on a nationwide basis. Undertaken 18 years after China's second census, the 1982 census provided total coverage of a territory of 9.6 million square kilometres, including some regions not easily accessibile and consisting of over 50 nationalities. Some five million enumerators, two million supervisors and three million census assistants were employed in this exercise. Publicity, outreach and popular participation were keys to its success.

UNDTCD provided technical co-operation with UNFPA funding from 1979 to 1984 in a wide range of areas, from census questionaire design, tabulation and sampling plans to census training. It also introduced computerized data processing into the census exercise. With 21 mainframe computers acquired for this effort, 4000 keying operators and 1100 supervisors recruited, a comprehensive series of statistics was collected and editing and tabulation work were greatly enhanced.

Support for TCDC programming



Several hours of bilateral and quite fruitful negotiations between Algeria and Indonesia were backstopped by UNDTCD at the Jakarta meeting

Along with its United Nations Development system partners, UNDTCD provided support for the technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC) programming exercise hosted by Indonesia and held from 29 July through 3 August in Jakarta.

This major multisectoral exercise, organized by the Special Unit for TCDC of UNDP, brought together Indonesia and 29 other developing countries from Asia and the Pacific, the Arab States, Africa, Latin America and Europe . It was a forum for bilateral negotiations on exchanges of expertise in the fields of agriculture, public works, health, human resources development, services, industry and energy.

Accords on 219 projects

The interregional meeting resulted in agreements on 219 projects to be carried out through TCDC, of which 165 will entail assistance from Indonesia to the other countries. The largest recipients of Indonesian assistance will be Fiji, Egypt, Tanzania, Mexico, Myanmar and Nepal.

On the other hand, 54 projects will involve expertise to be provided from the other countries to Indonesia. China, India and Mexico are the largest donors of such expertise.

In preparation for the exercise, UNDTCD project staff in participating countries were instructed to help governments match their technical capacities and needs with those of Indonesia.

Negotiations backstopped

At the Jakarta meeting itself, UNDTCD, other United Nations entities, donor countries and NGOs worked closely with the Special Unit for TCDC of UNDP in support of the efforts of the Indonesian government to ensure the meeting's success. UNDTCD also provided staff resources, as necessary, to assist the negotiations themselves.

In addition, during the implementation phase of several of the agreed upon projects in the fields of energy, public works and the handicapped, UNDTCD intends to provide catalytic financial support.

UNDTCD has assisted similar exercises for TCDC exchanges in recent years in China, Turkey, Tunisia and Egypt, in line with its longstanding commitment to the promotion of TCDC. These programming exercises have brought together some 80 developing countries for TCDC exchanges.

Project management in El Salvador

A new UNDTCD-assisted project should greatly enhance El Salvador's ability to execute development projects. "Strengthening of pre-investment process and management of investment projects" is helping public investment executing agencies operate in a timely and cost-effective manner.

With funding from the Inter-American Development Bank and the support of UNDP, the two year project aims to improve the quality and increase the number of public investment projects with completed advanced pre-investment studies, in particular those eligible for funding by international financial institutions, and to reduce the completion periods of these projects.

Begun in late 1989, it will provide some 500 officials with formal and in-service training in project formulation, appraisal, monitoring and follow-up. It will also establish project management systems in the main public sector executing units, propose improved legislation and regulations on bids for work related to public investment and prepare a project administration and financial management manual.

This project builds on and complements another, begun in 1988 with UNDP support, which has set up a public sector investment project data bank in the Ministry of Planning containing information on projects of all executing agencies. This bank was tapped to programme and follow-up on the Public Investment Plans in 1988, 1989 and 1990, to identify 688 new investment projects and to formulate the country's five-year public investment programme (1990-1994). In conjunction with this data bank, the project also set up an information system for technical co-operation projects. In addition, it has contributed to the development of a National System of Public Investment which regulates the various institutions in charge of public investment.

Due to the success of all these efforts, an interregional workshop on the project management system is planned for the near future.

Dynamic approach to water resources management

Many reservoirs in North China have been virtually depleted of water

One of the major problems facing China today is the shortage of water. Approximately 20 per cent of the cities in China currently face severe water shortages. To meet the needs of 300 major cities that are currently facing water shortages, China needs 10 million tons of additional water each day.

It is widely recognized that sustainable economic development of China will become more difficult unless water management problems are given greater attention.

In North China, which has had a drought since 1980, the only heavy rainfall in recent years was in the form of a typhoon in 1985. In this heavily populated region, the combination of less water, increasing demands by industrial and urban users, and industrial pollution have made the problem of water shortage particularly acute.

Water saving economy

In response to this situation the Government has been making strenuous efforts to establish a "water saving economy". In the agricultural sector, the particular stress of this approach has been on increased efficiency of water utilization through low volume irrigation techniques and cropping practices. In industry, the focus is on recycling, reusing reclaimed water and using seawater in coastal cities.

Complementing this, the State Science and Technology Commission (SSTC) is carrying out a three-staged policy study of water management in the Beijing-Tianjing area.

The first stage established a basic policy framework. The second consists of a number of subprojects, including water saving agriculture and the treatment of chemical industry waste water in Beijing.

UNDTCD, through its Water Resources Branch, has been called on to provide technical co-operation for the third stage, under a $3.4 million project funded by UNDP.

Comprehensive approach

All aspects of water resources management are to be tackled by under this innovative, 33 month project which is just getting underway.

In a break with the traditional reliance on water resources master plans, the project is pooling some 18 different types of expertise to create a macro-economic water planning model. This model will take into account the physical quantity of water in North China, socio-political and environmental as well as economic objectives.

Another important function of this model will be to provide guidelines and priorities for the allocation and reallocation of water between different users. Related to this, the model will facilitate and analyze the consequences of government policy decisions in the water resources field.

The project will also develop hydrological, water quality and management models and provide studies of specific problems connected with agricultural water saving, ground water pollution and waste water treatment.

Training is a key aspect of this project. Workshops and seminars are to be held to disseminate the results among the technical staff of all the provincial centres and to inform policy makers and managers of the potential of the models.

In addition, the project will train a team of programmers and engineers for the operation of the models.

Overall co-ordination

A first priority of the project will be to attack the critical problem of co-ordination of activities in the field of water planning and management. At the present, these activities are being handled by nine separate ministries or authorities at the central government level.

Co-ordinating efforts will entail the centralization of records and data in readily accessible computer information systems at the state, provincial and municipal levels. Efforts will be made to collate and ensure internal compatability of existing historic data regarding water resources. In addition, organizational arrangements, authority and responsibilities in the water resources management field will be clarified.

New directors

New directors have come to all four divisions of UNDTCD in recent months.

Mr. Hamdan Benaissa now heads the Development Administration Division. Mr. Benaissa, from Tunisia, joined the United Nations in 1967. He has worked in this Department since 1975, serving as Deputy Director for Middle East, Mediterranean, Europe and Interregional Programmes, as Chief of the Country Programming and Evaluation Branch, and as Director of the Programme Support Division. Prior to this he worked in the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization as Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General. Before entering the United Nations, Mr. Benaissa worked for the Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The new Director of the Programme Support Division is **Mr. Armando Duque,** a Colombian national who has been with the United Nations Secretariat for almost 32 years. Mr. Duque came to UNDTCD from the Department of Public Information (DPI), where was Director of the Committee Liaison and Administrative Services and Director of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. Prior to this he was Director of the Division for Monitoring, Analysis and Evaluation in the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance and Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and Secretary of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

Mrs. Dunja Pastizzi Ferencic, of Yugoslavia, is the new director of the Natural Resources and Energy Division. Mrs. Pastizzi Ferencic was previously the Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). Before this, she was a research adviser and economic projects coordinator of the Institute for Developing Countries in Zagreb and has been an adviser to various governmental and economic institutions in her country. She has also been an economic development consultant to the governments of Panama and Venezuela. In addition, she has worked with UNDP in relation to the promotion of technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC).

In the Policy, Programming and Development Planning Division the new director is **Mr. Kong Fannong**, a national of China. Mr. Kong was most recently the Executive Director for China to the Asian Development Bank. Mr. Kong has had a long career with his country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs where his posts included that of Counsellor and Director of the Division of International Economics, International Department and Deputy Coordinator in the African Department. He also served in the Chinese embassies in Khartoum and in Belgrade and was a researcher with the Institute for Foreign Affairs.

Update: Interregional workshops/seminars

24 Sept.-2 Oct., Austria
Digital cartographic data and evaluation of systems for digital mapping

16-20 October, Yugoslavia
Policy development for increasing participation of women in public management

5-9 November, Zimbabwe
Improving revenue administration

5-11 November, China
National disability machinery

13-21 November, Malta
Computeriztion of government accounting

26 Nov.- 7 Dec., Morocco
Computerized mineral title management and associated databases

3-7 December, Venezuela
Mobilization of resources for optimal water development, allocation and conservation

10-15 December, Seychelles
Petroleum Exploration

New advisors

UNDTCD is pleased to announce the appointment of the following new advisors, all of whom have joined us during the past year:

Djamal-Eddine Benzine, Algeria: Computer methodologies

Geoffrey Connor, U.K.: Physical infrastructure

Ola Gunnes, Norway: Electric power

Birgita Hedman, Sweden: Women in development

Pidatala Padmanabha, India: Population census

Ieda Siqueira, Brazil: Demographic statistics

Jacques Van Engel, Belgium: Energy planning

Hongren Zhou, China: Development planning

To our readers: Your contributions, letters and views are welcome.
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